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Disarmament Commission

243rd meeting

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New York

President: Ms. Quarless ..... (Jamaica)

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Mr. Widodo (Indonesia): Let me first say how pleased my delegation is at seeing you, Madam Chairperson, presiding over our deliberations. We are happy that this year the Disarmament Commission is chaired by you, an outstanding representative of Jamaica, with whom Indonesia has maintained friendly and cordial relations. Being aware of your dedication to disarmament, we are confident of achieving substantive progress in our endeavours under your guidance. Our felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau on their respective elections. We are grateful, of course, to the Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Dhanapala, who was with us this morning, for his comprehensive statement, which should guide our deliberations.

When the Disarmament Commission was convened last year, my delegation had the opportunity to present its views on the two substantive agenda items that are before us. As this is the second year of the general debate on those items, I shall confine my remarks to only some aspects, while reserving more detailed comments on specific questions for our deliberations in the Working Groups.

When the historic Millennium Summit was convened last September, it provided an unparalleled opportunity for reflection and for a reassessment of our objectives and priorities in disarmament. In coming to grips with some sombre realities, the Declaration adopted by our Heads of State and Government urged the international community

> "To strive for the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons, and to keep all options open for achieving this aim". (*General Assembly resolution 55/2, para. 9*)

It is undeniable that the most important disarmament question confronting the world is the abolition of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. After the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty, steady progress in eliminating nuclear arsenals by about two thirds was made, unilaterally or bilaterally, under the strategic arms reduction process, which was reinforced by the declared willingness to initiate START III talks and which will lead to significant reductions in the arsenals of the two leading military Powers. Those endeavours were greatly facilitated by a significant reduction in nuclear weapons stockpiles in the post-cold-war era, by the offer of some nuclear-weapon States to cease production of fissile materials for military purposes and to place them under safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and by the conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT).

The need for greater progress on global nuclear disarmament was also the focus of attention at both the 1995 and the 2000 Review Conferences of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. The obligation contained in article VI of that

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Treaty was reinforced by the 1995 decision on principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament, as well as by the acceptance at the 2000 review exercise of an unequivocal commitment to nuclear disarmament and of practical steps for systematic and progressive efforts towards the abolition of nuclear armaments. Those decisions reaffirm that the fundamental obligation to rid the world of the dangers posed by nuclear weapons continues to be a high priority in the international agenda.

Progress was also made on some issues peripheral to the nuclear agenda, such as the irreversibility of nuclear disarmament measures and transparency with regard to weapons capabilities. Indonesia was gratified to note that the final document acknowledged the diminishing role of nuclear weapons in security strategies, which will tend to minimize the risk of those weapons ever being used, and affirmed that the total elimination of nuclear weapons offered the only absolute guarantee against their use. The issue of tactical nuclear weapons was also taken up for the first time at a review conference and is no longer an obstacle to future deliberations. These constituted significant changes in the approach to nuclear disarmament, and they provide a direction for a future non-proliferation agenda and for steps towards nuclear disarmament.

These positive developments notwithstanding, we cannot but follow with great concern the lack of deep reductions in nuclear arsenals. In actions reminiscent of the persistence of deadlock during the cold war period, some of the nuclear-weapon States are solidifying their stockpiles and consolidating their weapons infrastructures. Modern designs are not only being maintained but are also being upgraded into more sophisticated weaponry. The focus continues to be on new rationalizations for the retention of nuclear weapons.

The world is thus confronted by the threat of a seemingly irreversible spiral of escalation posed by the initiation of space technologies for military purposes, by the ominous prospect of the unravelling of progress made though the selective implementation of arms-limitation treaties and by the threat of a fresh round of the arms race. The nuclear situation has indeed deteriorated, as negotiations either are stalled or are completely lacking on some critical issues, leaving open the possibility of a nuclear arms race being re-ignited and leading to an uncertain strategic era. A window of opportunity opened in the post-cold-war era to make nuclear weapons reductions and to move forward rather than continuing outmoded approaches. But a new period of global tension may result in a renewed arms race aggravated by new technological developments.

In that regard, we have before us numerous proposals advanced by States or groups of States reflecting an international consensus in favour of the total abolition of nuclear arsenals. Common approaches and the identification of practical and realistic measures to achieve that objective, involving all Member States, are among their distinguishing features and hallmarks. And their implementation within a timeframe would drive the process inexorably towards final elimination. The proposals include, *inter alia*, the elimination of destabilizing tactical nuclear weapons, whose very existence is fraught with the danger of accidental or unauthorized use; unilateral reductions based on reciprocity, which will open up new frontiers of arms limitation and lead to radical cuts in strategic arms; a fissile material cut-off treaty focusing attention equally on non-proliferation and on nuclear disarmament; universal adherence to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty; and the ratification of the protocols establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones in various parts of the world together with specific modalities to respond to the security concerns of each region. Indonesia and other non-aligned countries are firmly committed to nuclear disarmament. The Non-Aligned Movement's principled position was reiterated at the ministerial meeting held last April at Cartagena, Colombia.

My delegation shares the increasing concern over the development, proliferation and deployment of ballistic missiles that can carry weapons of mass destruction. Our concern is prompted by apprehension about a shift in the arms race from Europe to Asia. This underscores the need for a multilaterally negotiated, comprehensive and non-discriminatory agreement to reduce and eliminate destabilizing ballistic missiles without in any way hindering the use of such technology for peaceful purposes.

Of equal concern are plans for a missile defence, which would inevitably have far-reaching repercussions on existing arms control treaties and on the prospects for future agreements. They would be incompatible with the limiting provisions of the Treaty

on the Limitation of Anti-Ballistic Missile Systems, which has been generally recognized as a critical component of strategic stability and as an indispensable element for further reducing strategic armaments. The need for a comprehensive approach in resolving this issue in order to create an international climate conducive to the promotion of disarmament and international security is self-evident.

As far as the second substantive item on our agenda is concerned, we draw great benefit from past endeavours of the Disarmament Commission in formulating guidelines and recommendations on, among other things, conventional arms control, with particular emphasis on the consolidation of peace, on international arms transfers, on regional approaches to disarmament within the context of global security, and on confidence-building measures.

During its statement last year, my delegation dealt in detail with, and elaborated on, some of these measures. We will extend support to the Commission's efforts to formulate guidelines on confidence-building measures in the context of conventional arms. We believe that they have an important role to play as means of increasing transparency, clarifying intentions and, particularly, addressing the security dilemma. Rather than injecting issues that are irrelevant to disarmament, our endeavours should be guided by a sense of realism and pragmatism.

Indonesia has been a sponsor of General Assembly resolutions on objective information on military matters. Lack of adequate information on the military strength of States has often been a major cause of suspicion and a prime factor in the continuation of the arms race and in slow progress in disarmament efforts. Hence, the sharing of data could contribute significantly to dispelling suspicion and secrecy.

For these reasons, efforts to improve the flow of information on military matters are needed to establish confidence and overcome mistrust, and thereby facilitate the disarmament process. In this context, the great potential offered by modern technology, including information technologies and devices, can be utilized in preventing crises, reducing risks and ensuring the observance of arms control agreements, and thereby contributing to confidence-building among nations.

My delegation has also participated in the United Nations-sponsored standardized reporting of military expenditures, which constitutes another important approach to the objective of reliable information on military matters. If there was wider participation in this system, and if it was further developed in a series of measures, it could lead not only to a considerable increase in the data available on resources devoted to military purposes, but also to enhanced confidence- and security-building in various parts of the world.

Against the backdrop of an increase in the number of intrastate conflicts, a welcome development in recent years has been the growing awareness of the tragic consequences of illicit trade in small arms and light weapons in all its aspects. Specific and realistic proposals for addressing this problem have already been advanced as part of a far more multifaceted approach. As was the case with land mines, progress will depend on cooperation among Member States, based on a sense of humanity and common purpose. Ultimately, the credibility of our efforts in addressing this question will be measured in human terms. It will rest on whether or not our efforts help peoples and communities live in greater security. I remain confident that the forthcoming international conference will adopt a forward-looking agenda and a programme of action that will put in place global norms to be implemented by all Member States.

The Chairperson: I wish to draw representatives' attention to Working Paper 1, which has recently been circulated throughout the room. It represents a revised version of the Chairman's paper, prepared by Mr. Osei of Ghana, of Working Group I. I invite delegations to take very careful consideration of this document in preparation for the work of Working Group I.

Mr. Enkhsaikhan (Mongolia): At the outset, I would like to extend my delegation's warmest congratulations on your unanimous election, Madam Chairperson, and to pledge our full support and cooperation. Our felicitations also go to the other members of the Bureau on their election. I also join the previous speakers in expressing my delegation's gratitude to Under-Secretary-General Dhanapala for his important statement, in which he has touched upon the pressing issues of disarmament at the very beginning of this century.

Mongolia fully shares your view, Madam Chairperson, that the Disarmament Commission, an important international deliberative body, has an

increasing role to play in promoting the goals of arms control and disarmament at the regional as well as global levels. The international community is well aware of the excessive stockpiling of arms, some 30,000 nuclear warheads and 500 million small arms in different countries and various regions of the world.

The year 2001 is the second year of the Disarmament Commission's quest for agreements on two important topics: ways and means to achieve nuclear disarmament, and practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. My delegation would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude and appreciation to the Chairpersons of the two Working Groups, namely Mr. Osei of Ghana and Mrs. Martinics of Argentina, for the efforts they have been making since last year's session in promoting negotiations on the aforementioned two important issues.

Taking this opportunity, my delegation would like to focus briefly on some issues that, in its view, need priority attention.

Nuclear disarmament, the most crucial task of the whole range of disarmament and non-proliferation issues, is a prerequisite for the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security. By adopting the Millennium Declaration last year, the heads of State and Government of Member States of the United Nations have underlined their determination regarding the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, particularly nuclear weapons. This commitment should be vigorously pursued. Bearing this in mind, Mongolia welcomes and supports the proposal by the Secretary-General to convene a major international conference aimed at identifying ways of eliminating nuclear dangers.

In addition, we had a very important statement by the nuclear-weapon States concerning "an unequivocal undertaking to accomplish the total elimination of their nuclear arsenals leading to total nuclear disarmament", made during the 2000 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT). This statement implies taking concrete practical measures to reduce nuclear arsenals and to embark upon a process that would lead to a substantial reduction and ultimately to the total elimination of nuclear weapons, as reflected in the Final Document of the Conference.

Still, on nuclear disarmament my delegation believes that the Member States and parties concerned should make every effort to achieve, without delay, the following objectives: bringing the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) into force as soon as possible and ensuring compliance with its provisions, strengthening the non-proliferation regime and fully implementing the NPT, the preservation of the spirit of the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty and the conclusion of a universal and verifiable fissile materials cut-off treaty as early as possible. My delegation also attaches great importance to the implementation of START II and to the conclusion of START III.

Mongolia believes that the principles and guidelines on the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones adopted two years ago by the Disarmament Commission, would further consolidate the existing zones and would facilitate the establishment of new ones, which is an important and valuable component of nuclear non-proliferation and a positive factor of regional security and stability.

Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status is broadly supported by the international community. The General Assembly has adopted two resolutions in support of strengthening Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, and the five nuclear-weapon States last fall provided Mongolia with both positive and negative security assurances in connection with that status. We believe that a clearly defined and internationally recognized status would be Mongolia's practical contribution to promoting the goal of strengthening the non-proliferation regime.

The other important task of the Disarmament Commission is to discuss and identify practical confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms. Mongolia attaches great importance to reduction and even to the elimination of certain categories and types of conventional weapons. It believes, however, that in carrying out a reduction in conventional armaments the defence and security needs of States should be borne in mind. My delegation shares the legitimate concerns of the international community about the increasing threat from the spread of small arms and light weapons and their illegal trade. It would not be an exaggeration to say that today each of us knows by heart the alarming statistics of the impact on human life of these types of weapons during the past decade: 5 million people have died.

In this context, my delegation welcomes the ongoing preparations, under the chairmanship of Ambassador Carlos dos Santos of Mozambique, for the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects, in July 2001. That Conference should adopt a comprehensive action programme containing all the necessary measures to prevent, combat and eradicate the illicit trade in these types of weapons in all its aspects at the national, regional and global levels, as well as concrete ways for international cooperation, assistance and follow-up.

Mongolia welcomed the entry into force of the Convention on Anti-personnel Mines as an important step in conventional disarmament. Strict implementation of the Convention would substantially reduce human suffering in many regions of the world. Although my country's specific conditions do not allow Mongolia to join the Convention at present, we are supportive of the primary objective of banning landmines and will be seeking ways and means to accede to the Convention as early as possible.

It is also my delegation's belief that the further reduction of conventional arms and the increase in the transparency of military budgets and the arms trade of States would promote confidence-building. My delegation therefore advocates the further strengthening of the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you, Madam, of my delegation's full cooperation in your efforts to bring the work of the session to a successful conclusion.

The Chairperson: There are no other speakers on my list. If no other delegation wishes to take the floor at this time, I propose to adjourn the meeting.

We have a long day ahead of us tomorrow. There are already 22 speakers on our list — 10 for the morning and 12 for the afternoon — and still they come. I therefore propose to start promptly at 10 a.m. tomorrow, so that we can conclude our general exchange of views by the end of the day.

The meeting rose at 3.45 p.m.